

PREPARING TO RIDE

As a motorcycle rider, what you do before you start a trip goes a long way toward determining whether or not you will get to where you want to go safely. Before taking a trip, a safe and responsible rider makes a point to:

- Check the motorcycle's equipment.
- Become familiar with the motorcycle.
- Use proper face and eye protection.
- Wear the right gear.

PROPER EQUIPMENT

Massachusetts law requires motorcycles to meet minimum safety equipment standards. A motorcycle operator must ensure that all safety equipment items are in good working order. Items include, but are not limited to, the motorcycle's horn, rearview mirror, fenders, mufflers, brakes, and lighting.

The front of the motorcycle must be fitted with a white, properly aimed headlight. If attached to a motorcycle, a sidecar must be fitted with a white forward facing light. The rear of the motorcycle must be fitted with a red tail light, a stoplight, and a white light to illuminate the license plate.

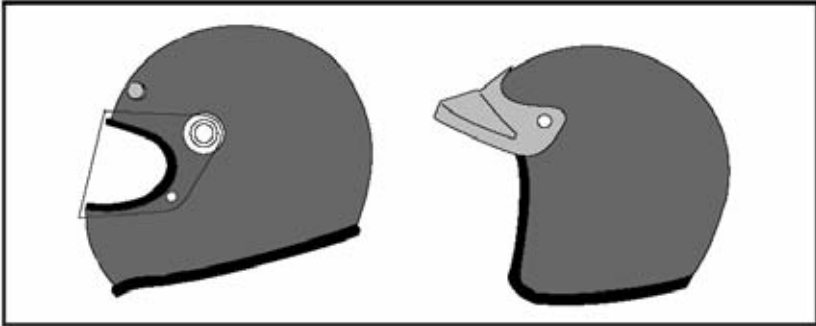
The motorcycle must be equipped with a secure seat for the operator. Should the motorcycle be equipped for carrying passengers, a secure seat, separate footpegs, and a handle strap must be provided. Motorcycle handlebars must not rise above an operator's shoulders when properly seated on the motorcycle.

A motorcycle rider can further help to protect him/herself by wearing the proper equipment. Selecting appropriate and properly fitting gear prior to riding can improve rider comfort and significantly reduce the risk of serious injury. In any crash, the rider has a far better chance of avoiding serious injury if properly equipped with an approved helmet, face and eye protection, and protective clothing.

According to the United States Department of Transportation (DOT) and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), there were thousands of injuries in motorcycle related accidents last year. Furthermore, per vehicle mile traveled, motorcycle riders were more likely than automobile passengers to die in a traffic accident.

HELMET USE

According to NHTSA, motorcycle helmet use saves the lives of hundreds of motorcyclists annually. Although a motorcycle helmet cannot prevent many other types of injuries, it is effective sixty-seven percent (67%) of the time in preventing brain injury. Helmet use for motorcycle riders and passengers is mandatory under Massachusetts law.



Helmets

HELMET SELECTION

All motorcycle helmets sold in the United States are required to meet Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard No. 218, the performance standard which establishes the minimum level of protection motorcycle helmets must afford each user.

Primarily, there are two types of motorcycle helmets providing two different levels of coverage: the three-quarter and full faced styled helmets. Please inspect the motorcycle helmet to ensure that it meets DOT and state standards. Further inspect the motorcycle helmet for any imperfections or obvious defects such as cracks, loose padding, frayed straps, or exposed metal. Ensure that the motorcycle helmet fits snugly and that there are no distractions or blind spots. Finally, when riding, ensure that the motorcycle helmet is securely fastened to your head to maximize the level of protection in the event of an accident.

Not all motorcycle helmet damage is obvious. Prior to purchasing a used motorcycle helmet, first ensure that the helmet is produced by a manufacturer or distributor that will re-inspect the helmet for damage.

FACIAL PROTECTION

A plastic shatter-resistant faceshield (VESC-8) can help protect your whole face in the event of a crash and provides protection against wind, dust, dirt, rain, insects, and pebbles thrown up from vehicles traveling ahead. For the safety of the rider, it is recommended that you wear a full faceshield to protect the eyes and face from elements and road hazards that may otherwise distract the operator and increase the risk of injury.

Goggles protect your eyes, though they will not provide protection like a faceshield does. A windshield is not a substitute for a faceshield or goggles. Most windshields, eyeglasses, and sunglasses will not protect your eyes from the wind.

Tinted eye protection should not be worn at night or any other time where little light is available.

To be effective, eye and faceshield protection must:

- Be free of scratches
- Be resistant to penetration
- Give a clear view of either side
- Fasten securely so it does not blow off
- Permit air to pass through to reduce fogging
- Permit enough room for eyeglasses or sunglasses, if needed

DEFENSIVE CLOTHING

Selecting the appropriate and proper gear prior to riding can significantly reduce the risk of serious injury. Properly fitted riding gear or layered clothing that allows the body to breathe is recommended for riders of all skill levels. In cold or wet weather, your clothes should keep you warm and dry, as well as protect you from injury. You cannot control a motorcycle well if you are numb from the cold. Riding for long periods in cold weather can cause severe chill, fatigue, and even hypothermia. A winter jacket should resist wind and fit snugly at the neck, wrists, and waist. Good quality rain suits designed for motorcycle riding resist tearing apart or ballooning at high speeds.

Jackets and pants should cover your arms and legs completely. They should fit snugly, yet loosely enough to move freely. Leather and newer synthetic materials also provide adequate protection for the motorcycle rider. It is recommended that riders wear jackets even in warm weather to prevent dehydration. Many jackets are designed to protect you without allowing your body to overheat.

Boots and shoes should be high enough to cover your ankles and sturdy enough to give them support. Soles should be made of hard, durable, slip-resistant material. Keep heels short so they do not catch on rough surfaces. Tuck laces in so they will not catch on your motorcycle.

Gloves allow a better grip and help protect your hands in an accident. Your gloves should be made of leather or a synthetic, durable material capable of providing the necessary protection.